

# **S**ONNETS *from the* **PORTUGUESE**

**ELIZABETH BARRETT  
BROWNING**

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SONNETS FROM  
THE PORTUGUESE





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BY  
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING



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I

I thought once how Theocritus had sung  
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for  
years,

Who each one in a gracious hand appears  
To bear a gift for mortals, old or young;  
And as I mused it in his antique tongue,  
I saw in gradual vision through my tears,  
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,  
Those of my own life, who by turns had flung  
A shadow across me. Straightway I was  
'ware,

So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move  
Behind me, and drew me backward by the  
hair;

And a voice said in mastery while I strove:  
"Guess now who holds thee?"—"Death!"

I said. But there  
The silver answer rang: "Not Death but  
Love."



## II

But only three in all God's universe  
Have heard this word thou hast said—Him-  
self, beside

Thee speaking and me listening! and replied  
One of us—*that* was God!—and laid the  
curse

So darkly on my eyelids as to amerce  
My sight from seeing thee—that if I had  
died,

The deathweights placed there would have  
signified

Less absolute exclusion. "Nay" is worse  
From God than from all others, O my friend!  
Men could not part us with their wordly jars,  
Nor the seas change us, nor the tempest bend:  
Our hands would touch for all the mountain-  
bars—

And, heaven being rolled between us at the end,  
We should but vow the faster for the stars.



### III

Unlike are we, unlike, O princely Heart!  
Unlike our uses and our destinies.  
Our ministering two angels look surprise  
On one another, as they strike athwart  
Their wings in passing. Thou, bethink thee,  
art

A guest for queens to social pageantries,  
With gazes from a hundred brighter eyes  
Than tears even can make mine, to ply thy  
part

Of chief musician. What has *thou* to do  
With looking from the lattice-lights at me,  
A poor, tired, wandering singer—singing  
through

The dark, and leaning up a cypress tree?  
The chrism is on thine head—on mine, the  
dew—

And Death must dig the level where these  
agree.



#### IV

Thou hast thy calling to some palace floor,  
Most gracious singer of high poems! where  
The dancers will break footing, from the  
care

Of watching up thy pregnant lips for more,  
And dost thou lift this house's latch too poor  
For hand of thine? and canst thou think and  
bear

To let thy music drop here unaware  
In folds of golden fullness at my door?  
Look up and see the casement broken in,  
The bats and owlets builders in the roof!  
My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.  
Hush! call no echo up in further proof  
Of desolation! there's a voice within  
That weeps as—thou must sing—alone,  
aloof.



# V

I lift my heavy heart up solemnly,  
 As once Electra her sepulchral urn,  
 And, looking in thine eyes, I overturn  
 The ashes at thy feet. Behold and see  
 What a great heap of grief lay hid in me,  
 And how the red wild sparkles dimly burn  
 Through the ashen grayness. If thy foot in  
 scorn

Could tread them out to darkness utterly,  
 It might be well perhaps. But if instead  
 Thou wait beside me for the wind to blow  
 The gray dust up—those laurels on thine  
 head,

O my Beloved, will not shield thee so,  
 That none of all the fires shall scorch and  
 shred

The hair beneath. Stand farther off, then.  
 Go!





## VI

Go from me! Yet I feel that I shall stand  
Henceforth in thy shadow. Nevermore  
Alone upon the threshold of my door  
Of individual life I shall command  
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand  
Serenely in the sunshine as before,  
Without the sense of that which I forbore—  
Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land  
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in  
mine  
With pulses that beat double. What I do  
And what I dream includes thee, as the  
wine  
Must taste of its own grapes. And when I  
sue  
God for myself, He hears that name of  
thine,  
And sees within my eyes the tears of two.



## VII

The face of all the world is changed, I think,  
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul  
Move still, oh, still, beside me, as they stole  
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink  
Of obvious death, where I who thought to sink  
Was caught up into love, and taught the  
whole

Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole  
God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,  
And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with thee  
anear.

The name of country, heaven, are changed  
away

For where thou art or shalt be, there or here;  
And this—this lute and song—loved yes-  
terday,

(The singing angels know) are only dear,  
Because thy name moves right in what they  
ay.



## VIII

What can I give thee back, O liberal  
And princely giver—who hast brought the  
gold

And purple of thine heart, unstained, untold,  
And laid them on the outside of the wall  
For such as I to take or leave withal,  
In unexpected largesse? Am I cold,  
Ungrateful, that for these most manifold  
High gifts, I render nothing back at all?  
Not so; not cold—but very poor instead!  
Ask God who knows! for frequent tears  
have run

The colors from my life, and left so dead  
And pale a stuff, it were not fitly done  
To give the same as pillow to thy head.  
Go farther! let it serve to trample on.





## IX

Can it be right to give what I can give?  
To let thee sit beneath the fall of tears  
As salt as mine, and hear the sighing years  
Re-sighing on my lips renunciative  
Through those infrequent smiles which fail  
to live  
For all thy adjurations? O my fears,  
That this can scarce be right! We are not  
peers,  
So to be lovers; and I own and grieve  
That givers of such gifts as mine are must  
Be counted with the ungenerous. Out, alas!  
I will not soil thy purple with my dust,  
Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-glass,  
Nor give thee any love—which were unjust.  
Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.



X

Yet, love, mere love, is beautiful indeed  
And worthy of acceptance. Fire is bright,  
Let temple burn, or flax; an equal light  
Leaps in the flame from cedar-plank or  
weed;

And love is fire. And when I say at need  
*I love thee*—mark—*I love thee!*—in thy  
sight

I stand transfigured, glorified aright,  
With conscience of the new rays that proceed  
Out of my face toward thine. There's nothing low

In love, when love the lowest: meanest creatures

Who love God, God accepts while loving so.  
And what I *feel*, across the inferior features  
Of what I *am*, doth flash itself, and show  
How that great work of Love enhances  
Nature's.



## XI

And therefore if to love can be desert,  
I am not all unworthy. Cheeks as pale  
As these you see, and trembling knees that  
fail

To bear the burden of a heavy heart,  
This weary minstrel-life that once was girt  
To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail  
To pipe now 'gainst the valley nightingale  
A melancholy music—why advert  
To these things? O Beloved, it is plain  
I am not of thy worth nor for thy place!  
And yet, because I love thee, I obtain  
From that same love this vindicating  
grace—

To live on still in love, and yet in vain,  
To bless thee, yet renounce thee to thy face.



## XII

Indeed this very love which is my boast,  
And which, when rising up from breast to  
brow

Doth crown me with a ruby large enow  
To draw men's eyes and prove the inner  
cost—

This love even, all my worth, to the uttermost,  
I should not love withal, unless that thou  
Hadst set me an example, shown me how,  
When first thine earnest eyes with mine were  
crossed,

And love called love. And thus I cannot  
speak

Of love even as a good thing of my own.  
Thy soul hath snatched up mine all faint and  
weak,

And placed it by thee on a golden throne—  
And that I love (O soul, we must be meek!)  
Is by thee only, whom I love alone.



### XIII

And wilt thou have me fashion into speech  
The love I bear thee, finding words enough,  
And hold the torch out, while the winds are  
rough,

Between our faces to cast light on each?—  
I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach  
My hand to hold my spirit so far off  
From myself—me—that I should bring thee  
proof

In words, of love hid in me out of reach.  
Nay, let the silence of my womanhood  
Commend my woman-love to thy belief—  
Seeing that I stand unwon, however wooed,  
And rend the garment of my life, in brief,  
By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,  
Lest one touch of this heart convey its grief.





✓ XIV

If thou must love me, let it be for nought  
Except for love's sake only. Do not say  
"I love her for her smile—her look—her way  
Of speaking gently—for a trick of thought  
That falls in well with mine, and certes  
brought

A sense of pleasant ease on such a day:"—  
For these things in themselves, Beloved, may  
Be changed, or change for thee—and love so  
wrought

May be unwrought so. Neither love me for  
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry:  
A creature might forget to weep, who bore  
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby.  
But love me for love's sake, that evermore  
Thou mayst love on through love's eternity.



XV

Accuse me not, beseech thee, that I wear  
Too calm and sad a face in front of thine;  
For we two look two ways, and cannot  
shine

With the same sunlight on our brow and  
hair.

On me thou lookest with no doubting care,  
As on a bee shut in a crystalline;  
For sorrow hath shut me safe in love's divine,  
And to spread wing and fly in the outer air  
Were most impossible failure, if I strove  
To fail so. But I look on thee—on thee—  
Beholding, besides love, the end of love  
Hearing oblivion beyond memory;  
As one who sits and gazes from above,  
Over the rivers to the bitter sea.



## XVI

And yet, because thou overcomest so,  
Because thou art noble and like a king,  
Thou canst prevail against my fears and fling  
Thy purple round me, till my heart shall  
grow  
Too close against thine heart henceforth to  
know  
How it shook when alone. Why, conquering  
May prove as lordly and complete a thing  
In lifting upward as in crushing low!  
And as a vanquished soldier yields his sword  
To one who lifts him from the bloody earth,  
Even so, Beloved, I at last record,  
Here ends my strife. If *thou* invite me forth,  
I rise above abasement at the word.  
Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth.





## XVII

My poet, thou canst touch on all the notes  
God set between his After and Before,  
And strike up and strike off the general  
    roar

Of the rushing worlds a melody that floats  
In a serene air purely. Antidotes  
Of medicated music, answering for  
Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst pour  
From thence into their ears. God's will de-  
    votes

Thine to such ends, and mine to wait on  
    thine!

How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for most  
    use?

A hope, to sing by gladly? or a fine  
Sad memory, with thy songs to interfuse?  
A shade in which to sing—of palm or pine?  
A grave on which to rest from singing?  
    Choose.



## XVIII

I never gave a lock of hair away  
To a man, Dearest, except this to thee,  
Which now upon my fingers thoughtfully  
I ring out to the full brown length, and say:  
"Take it." My day of youth went yesterday;

My hair no longer bounds to my foot's glee,  
Nor plant I it from rose or myrtle-tree,  
As girls do, any more: it only may  
Now shade on two pale cheeks, the mark of  
tears,

Taught drooping from the head that hangs  
aside

Through sorrow's trick. I thought the funeral  
shears

Would take this first, but Love is justified:  
Take it thou—finding pure, from all those  
years,

The kiss my mother left here when she died.



## XIX

The soul's Rialto hath its merchandise;  
I barter curl for curl upon that mart,  
And from my poet's forehead to my heart  
Receive this lock which outweighs argosies—  
As purple black, as erst to Pindar's eyes  
The dim purpureal tresses gloomed athwart  
The nine white Muse-brows. For this  
counterpart,

The bay-crown's shade, Beloved, I surmise,  
Still lingers on thy curl, it is so black!  
Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing breath,  
I tie the shadow safe from gliding back,  
And lay the gift where nothing hindereth,  
Here on my heart as on thy brow, to lack  
No natural heat till mine grows cold in  
death.



✓  
XX

Beloved, my Beloved, when I think  
That thou wast in the world a year ago,  
What time I sate alone here in the snow  
And saw no footprint, heard the silence sink  
No moment at thy voice, but link by link  
Went counting all my chains as if that so  
They never could fall off at any blow  
Struck by thy possible hand—why, thus I  
drink

Of life's great cup of wonder. Wonderful,  
Never to feel thee thrill the day or night  
With personal act or speech—nor ever cull  
Some prescience of thee with the blossoms  
white

Thou sawest growing! Atheists are as dull,  
Who cannot guess God's presence out of  
sight.





✓  
XXI

Say over again and yet once over again  
That thou dost love me. Though the word  
repeated

Should seem "a cuckoo-song," as thou dost  
treat it,

Remember, never to the hill or plain,  
Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-strain  
Comes the fresh Spring in all her green com-  
pleted!

Beloved, I, amid the darkness greeted  
By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's pain  
Cry, "Speak once more, thou lovest!" Who  
can fear

Too many stars, though each in heaven shall roll  
Too many flowers, though each shall crown  
the year?

Say thou dost love me, love me, love me—toll  
The silver iterance!—only minding, Dear,  
To love me also in silence with thy soul.



## XXII

When our two souls stand up erect and  
strong  
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and  
nigher,  
Until the lengthening wings break into fire  
At either curved point—what bitter wrong  
Can the earth do to us, that we should not  
long  
Be here contented? Think. In mounting  
higher,  
The angels would press on us, and aspire  
To drop some golden orb of perfect song  
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay  
Rather on earth, Beloved—where the unfit  
Contrarious moods of men recoil away  
And isolate pure spirits, and permit  
A place to stand and love in for a day,  
With darkness and the death-hour rounding  
it.



### XXIII

Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead,  
Wouldst thou miss any life in losing mine?  
And would the sun for thee more coldly shine,  
Because of grave-damps falling round my  
head?

I marveled, my Beloved, when I read  
Thy thought so in the letter. I am thine—  
But—so much to thee? Can I pour thy wine  
While my hands tremble? Then my soul,  
instead

Of dreams of death, resumes life's lower  
range.

Then, love me, Love! look on me—breathe  
on me!

As brighter ladies do not count it strange,  
For love, to give up acres and degree,  
I yield the grave for thy sake, and exchange  
My near sweet view of Heaven for earth  
with thee!



## XXIV

Let the world's sharpness like a clasp knife  
Shut in upon itself and do no harm  
In this close hand of Love, now soft and  
warm;

And let us hear no sound of human strife  
After the click of the shutting. Life to life—  
I lean upon thee, Dear, without alarm,  
And feel as safe as guarded by a charm  
Against the stab of worldlings, who if rife  
Are weak to injure. Very whitely still  
The lilies of our lives may reassure  
Their blossoms from their roots, accessible  
Alone to heavenly dews that drop not fewer;  
Growing straight, out of man's reach, on the  
hill.

God only, who made us rich, can make us  
poor.





## XXV

A heavy heart, Beloved, have I borne  
From year to year until I saw thy face,  
And sorrow after sorrow took the place  
Of all those natural joys as lightly worn  
As the stringed pearls, each lifted in its  
turn  
By a beating heart at dance-time. Hopes  
apace  
Were changed to long despairs, till God's  
own grace  
Could scarcely lift above the world forlorn  
My heavy heart. Then *thou* didst bid me  
bring  
And let it drop adown thy calmly great  
Deep being! Fast it sinketh, as a thing  
Which its own nature doth precipitate,  
While thine doth close above it, mediating  
Betwixt the stars and the unaccomplished  
fate.



## XXVI

I lived with visions for my company  
Instead of men and women, years ago  
And found them gentle mates, nor thought  
to know

A sweeter music than they played to me.  
But soon their trailing purple was not free  
Of this world's dust, their lutes did silent grow,  
And I myself grew faint and blind below  
Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU didst  
come—to be,

Beloved, what they *seemed*. Their shining  
fronts,

Their songs, their splendors—better, yet the  
same,

As river-water hallowed into fonts—  
Met in thee, and from out thee overcame  
My soul with satisfaction of all wants—  
Because God's gifts put man's best dreams  
to shame.



## XXVII

My own Beloved, who has lifted me  
From this drear flat of earth where I was  
thrown,

And in betwixt the languid ringlets blown  
A life-breath, till the forehead hopefully  
Shines out again, as all the angels see,  
Before thy saving kiss! My own, my own,  
Who camest to me when the world was gone,  
And I who looked for only God found *thee*!  
I find thee: I am safe, and strong, and glad.  
As one who stands in dewless asphodel  
Looks backward on the tedious time he had  
In the upper life—so, I, with bosom-swell,  
Make witness here, between the good and  
bad,

That love, as strong as Death, retrieves as  
well.



## XXVIII

My letters all dead paper, mute and white!  
And yet they seem alive and quivering  
Against my tremulous hands which loose the  
string

And let them drop down on my knee to-night.  
This said, he wished to have me in his sight  
Once, as a friend; this fixed a day in spring  
To come and touch my hand—a simple  
thing,

Yet I wept for it!—this—the paper's light—  
Said, *Dear, I love thee*; and I sank and  
quailed

As if God' future thundered on my past.  
This said, *I am thine*—and so its ink has  
paled

With lying at my heart that beat too fast;  
And this—O Love, thy words have ill  
availed,

If what this said I dared repeat at last!





✓  
XXIX

I think of thee!—my thoughts do twine and  
bud

About thee, as wild vines about a tree  
Put out broad leaves and soon there's nought  
to see

Except the straggling green which hides the  
wood.

Yet, O my palm-tree, be it understood  
I will not have my thoughts instead of thee  
Who art dearer, better! Rather instantly  
Renew thy presence; as a strong tree should,  
Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all bare,  
And let these bands of greenery which in-  
sphere thee

Drop heavily down—burst, shattered, every-  
where!

Because, in this deep joy to see and hear thee  
And breathe within thy shadow a new air,  
I do not think of thee—I am too near thee.



XXX

I see thy image through my tears to-night,  
And yet to-day I saw thee smiling. How  
Refer the cause?—Beloved, is it thou  
Or I who makes me sad? The acolyte  
Amid the chanted joy and thankful rite  
May so fall flat, with pale insensate brow,  
On the altar-stair. I hear thy voice and  
vow  
Perplexed, uncertain, since thou art out of  
sight,  
As he, in his swooning ears, the choir's  
amen.  
Beloved, dost thou love? or did I see all  
The glory as I dreamed, and fainted when  
Too vehement light dilated my ideal  
For my soul's eyes? Will that light come  
again  
As now these tears come—falling hot and  
real?



XXXI

Thou comest! all is said without a word.  
I sit beneath thy looks, as children do  
In the noon-sun, with souls that tremble  
through

Their happy eyelids from an unaverred  
Yet prodigal inward joy. Behold, I erred  
In that last doubt! and yet I cannot rue  
The sin most, but the occasion—that we  
two

Should for a moment stand unministered  
By a mutual presence. Ah, keep near and  
close,

Thou dovelike help! and, when my fears  
would rise,

With thy broad heart serenely interpose:  
Brood down with thy divine sufficiencies  
These thoughts which tremble when bereft  
of those,

Like callow birds left desert to the skies.



## XXXII

The first time that the sun rose on thine oath  
To love me, I looked forward to the moon  
To slacken all those bonds which seemed too soon  
And quickly tied to make a lasting troth.  
Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may quickly  
loathe;

And, looking on myself, I seemed not one  
For such man's love!—more like an out-of-tune  
Worn viol, a good singer would be wroth  
To spoil his song with, and which, snatched  
in haste,

Is laid down at the first ill-sounding note.  
I did not wrong myself so, but I placed  
A wrong on *thee*. For perfect strains may  
float

'Neath master-hands from instruments de-  
faced—

And great souls, at one stroke, may do and  
doat.





### XXXIII

Yes, call me by my pet name! let me hear  
The name I used to run at, when a child,  
From innocent play, and leave the cowslips  
    piled,  
To glance up in some face that proved me  
    dear  
With the look of its eyes. I miss the clear  
Fond voices, which, being drawn and reconciled  
Into the music of heaven's undefiled,  
Call me no longer. Silence on the bier  
While I call God—call God!—So let thy  
    mouth  
Be heir to those who are now exanimate;  
Gather the north flowers to complete the  
    south,  
And catch the early love up in the late!  
Yes, call me by that name—and I, in truth,  
With the same heart, will answer and not wait.



### XXXIV

With the same heart, I said, I'll answer thee  
As those, when thou shalt call me by my  
name—

Lo, the vain promise! Is the same the same,  
Perplexed and ruffled by life's strategy?  
When called before, I told how hastily  
I dropped my flowers or brake off from a  
game,

To run and answer with the smile that came  
At play's last moment, and went on with me  
Through my obedience. When I answer  
now,

I drop a grave thought—break from soli-  
tude—

Yet still my heart goes to thee—ponder  
how—

Not as to a single good but all my good!  
Lay thy hand on it, best one, and allow  
That no child's foot could run fast as this blood.



XXXV

If I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange  
And be all to me? Shall I never miss  
Home-talk and blessing and the common kiss  
That comes to each in turn, nor count it  
strange,

When I look up, to drop on a new range  
Of walls and floors, another home than  
this?

Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which is  
Filled by dead eyes too tender to know  
change?

That's hardest! If to conquer love has tried,  
To conquer grief tries more, as all things  
prove;

For grief indeed is love and grief beside.

Alas, I have grieved so I am hard to love—  
Yet love me—wilt thou? Open thine heart  
wide

And fold within the wet wings of thy dove.



### XXXVI

When we met first and loved, I did not  
build

Upon the event with marble. Could it mean  
To last, a love set pendulous between  
Sorrow and sorrow? Nay, I rather thrilled,  
Distrusting every light that seemed to gild  
The onward path, and feared to overlean  
A finger even. And though I have grown  
serene

And strong since then, I think that God has  
willed

A still renewable fear—O love, O troth—  
Lest these enclasped hands should never  
hold,

This mutual kiss drop down between us both  
As an unowned thing, once the lips being  
cold,

And Love be false! if *he*, to keep one oath,  
Must lose one joy by his life's star foretold.





### XXXVII

Pardon, oh, pardon, that my soul should  
make

Of all that strong divineness which I know  
For thine and thee, an image only so  
Formed of the sand, and fit to shift and  
break.

It is that distant years which did not take  
Thy sovranity, recoiling with a blow,  
Have forced my swimming brain to undergo  
Their doubt and dread, and blindly to for-  
sake

Thy purity of likeness and distort  
Thy worthiest love to a worthless counter-  
feit:

As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in port,  
His guardian sea-god to commemorate,  
Should set a sculptured porpoise, gills a-  
snort

And vibrant tail, within the temple-gate.





### XXXVIII

First time he kissed me, but he only kissed  
The fingers of this hand wherewith I write,  
And ever since it grew more clean and white—  
Slow to world greetings, quick with its  
“Oh, list,”

When the angels speak. A ring of amethyst  
I could not wear here plainer to my sight  
Than that first kiss. The second passed in  
height

The first, and sought the forehead, and half  
missed,

Half falling on the hair. O beyond meed!  
That was the chrism of love which love's own  
crown,

With sanctifying sweetness, did precede.  
The third upon my lips was folded down  
In perfect, purple state; since when, indeed,  
I have been proud and said: “My Love,  
my own.”



### XXXIX

Because thou has the power and own'st the  
grace

To look through and behind this mask of me  
(Against which years have beat thus blanch-  
ingly

With their rains), and behold my soul's true  
face,

The dim and dreary witness of life's race—  
Because thou hast the faith and love to see,  
Through that same soul's distracting lethargy,  
The patient angel waiting for his place

In the new Heavens—because nor sin nor woe,  
Nor God's infliction, nor death's neighbor-  
hood,

Nor all which others viewing, turn to go,  
Nor all which makes me tired of all, self-  
viewed—

Nothing repels thee—Dearest, teach me so  
To pour out gratitude, as thou dost good!



XL

Oh, yes! they love through all this world of  
ours!

I will not gainsay love, called love forsooth.  
I have heard love talked in my early youth,  
And since, not so long back but that the  
flowers

Then gathered smell still. Mussulmans and  
Giaours

Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have no ruth  
For any weeping. Polypheme's white tooth  
Slips on the nut, if after frequent showers  
The shell is over-smooth; and not so much  
Will turn the thing called love aside to hate,  
Or else to oblivion. But thou art not such  
A lover, my Beloved! thou canst wait  
Through sorrow and sickness, to bring souls  
to touch,

And think it soon when others cry "Too  
late."



XLI

I thank all who have loved me in their hearts,  
With thanks and love from mine. Deep  
    thanks to all

Who paused a little near the prison-wall  
To hear my music in its louder parts,  
Ere they went onward, each one to the mart's  
Or temple's occupations, beyond call.  
But thou, who, in my voice's sink and fall  
When the sob took it, thy divinest Art's  
Own instrument didst drop down at thy foot,  
To hearken what I said between my tears—  
Instruct me how to thank thee! Oh, to  
    shoot

My soul's full meaning into future years,  
That *they* should lend it utterance, and salute  
Love that endures, from Life that disappears!





## XLII

*My future will not copy fair my past—*  
I wrote that once; and thinking at my side  
My ministering life-angel justified  
The word by his appealing look upcast  
To the white throne of God, I turned at last,  
And there, instead, saw thee, not unallied  
To angels in thy soul! Then I, long tried  
By natural ills, received the comfort fast,  
While budding, at thy sight, my pilgrim's  
staff

Gave out green leaves with morning dews  
impearled.

I seek no copy now of life's first half:  
Leave here the pages with long musing curled,  
And write me new my future's epigraph,  
New angel mine, unhopéd for in the world!





### XLIII

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.  
I love thee to the depth and breadth and  
height

My soul can reach, when feeling out of  
sight

For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.

I love thee to the level of every day's

Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.

I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;

I love thee purely, as men turn from Praise.

I love thee with the passion put to use

In my old griefs, and with my childhood's  
faith.

I love thee with a love I seemed to lose

With my lost saints—I love thee with the  
breath,

Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God  
choose,

I shall but love thee better after death.



#### XLIV

Beloved, thou hast brought me many flowers  
Plucked in the garden, all the summer  
through

And winter, and it seemed as if they grew  
In this close room, nor missed the sun and  
showers.

So, in the like name of that love of ours,  
Take back these thoughts which here un-  
folded too,

And which on warm and cold days I withdrew  
From my heart's ground. Indeed, those beds  
and bowers

Be overgrown with bitter weeds and rue,  
And wait thy weeding; yet here's eglantine,  
Here's ivy!—take them, as I used to do  
Thy flowers, and keep them where they shall  
not pine.

Instruct thine eyes to keep their colors true,  
And tell thy soul their roots are left in mine.





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